

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

# CARLOS AMORALES

## Working Tools



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July - November 2017

Galleries A and B and the Foundry

Derivation is one of the processes by which words are formed that allows languages to designate concepts semantically related to others considered their predecessors or that are linked to their origin. At times, it is simply the “transfer” of meaning from one term to another (*intentional* from *intention*, for example), while other times it has to do with the emergence of objects or concepts deriving from previous ones, or with the natural evolution of language. In every case, derivation allows lexicon to designate multiple meanings using a much smaller number of roots, or nuclei of meaning.

The work of Carlos Amorales (Mexico City, 1970) is centered on language, translation as a process to generate meaning and the (im)possibility of communication via encrypted or unrecognizable forms. Amorales operates on the fringes of images and signs, using different media including animation, video, film, drawing, installation, performance and sound. His practice is based on different forms of derivation, understood as the displacement of this linguistic strategy to the field of art: instruments that transform into the characters of his films, letters that become shapes and narratives that turn into actions that are impossible to verbalize. In this way, derivation is not merely a mechanism of reproduction but rather a process of resignification through common conceptual and visual elements.

A significant portion of Amorales’ work is based on the *Liquid Archive* (1998 – 2010), a repository of approximately 4,000 vector graphics created by the artist from silhouettes of personal photographs, artistic documents and internet images, among other sources. The artist created these images as content for animated works, some of which are shown in Gallery A (*Useless Wonder*, 2006, for example), and to make prints, paintings and sculptures, on display in Gallery B (*Selected Ghosts (Composition)*, 2008; and *Small Colors for Holding Large Spaces*, 2010, amongst others). He conceived the image archive as an open source tool to be used in various ways for art and culture, by other people as well as for his own purposes.

Amongst the projects that emerged from this archive is *Herramientas de trabajo* (*Working Tools*, 2010), a film in which a series of flat plastic figures in animal and human shapes are intermittently tossed alongside one another into the camera's frame. Without any apparent order, the succession of silhouettes suggests random visual narratives. These shapes materialized as drawing tools (calibrated with and like set-squares or rulers) that the artist then used in other works included in this exhibition, underlining its cohesive quality. This piece, after which the exhibit is titled, summarizes the process of derivation that characterizes Amorales' work: from the artist's photographs came the *Liquid Archive*, from the *Liquid Archive* followed the drawing tools, with the tools he made the film, and so on.

In other instances, the process of derivation is less evident: the artist structures his pieces and projects on a common axis and on recurring elements where branching out occurs simultaneously in different directions. *El esplendor geométrico* (*The Geometric Splendor*, 2015), for example, is a series of 12 wooden collages painted with silkscreen printing ink, their shapes consisting of irregular geometric pieces of various colors. Based on these structures, the artist developed an illegible typeface. Also related to this piece is *La aldea maldita* (*The Cursed Village*, 2016), a series of small drawings created with stamps of abstract figures. It is also a film of the same name that uses these drawings as its script. Part of Amorales' project for the Mexican pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale, it tells the story of the lynching of a migrant family at the hands of villagers in a convergence of abstract and narrative languages. Amorales also used these abstract figures for the set design of *El no me mires* (*The Eye Me Not*, 2015), also included in the film program in Gallery A.

While the idea of hybridization in Amorales' work has been discussed on several occasions, this exhibit leans towards the notion of derivation and seeks to provide a broad picture of the artist's trajectory, not focusing on the works as a final result but rather as a particular circumstance within a wider process. Like other pieces included in the show, *Working Tools* can be understood as an instant within this journey, a still frame on the visual and thought continuum that is the artist's body of work.

*Carlos Amorales. Working Tools* is on view in Galleries A and B and the Foundry, and is divided into three sections organizing three of the artist's primary interests: the moving image, the fixed image (including two-dimensional pieces using various techniques) and music. Gallery A, devoted to the moving image, is in turn divided into two parts: one, set up like a cinema, shows pieces in a

film-like format while the other brings together a group of animated and video pieces in a gallery-type environment.

Two projects related to music are presented in the Foundry. The large format installation *Ya veremos cómo todo reverbera* (*We'll See How Everything Reverberates*, 2010) is a piece that evokes the hanging sculptures of Alexander Calder but whose abstract shapes have been replaced by cymbals, making it a musical instrument that functions like a nucleus and also fulfils the role of welcoming and activating element of the exhibition. Accompanying this mobile is *Anti Tropicalia* (2015-2017), a series of graphite guiros or percussion instruments, applied to the wall. The resulting drawing concludes the transition (or derivation) from a musical to a drawing instrument.

Without being retrospective, *Carlos Amorales. Working Tools* demonstrates the varied and prolific career of the artist as well as the elements that unify it: images, ideas and working methods that are transmitted from one project to the next. And sometimes in different directions. This mechanism implies that certain elements are recurrent within Amorales' body of work, thereby generating a momentarily visible structure that gives unity and coherence to a practice spanning more than 20 years. Seen through the lens of derivation, the pieces included in the exhibition are not only works of art, they are also working tools that allow for new pieces and processes to emerge.



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